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ABSTRACT

The authors, members of the System Wide Itinerant Resource Teacher (SWIRT) team, describe and analyze inservice training for general education teachers in compliance with P.L. 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) under the Tennessee State Plan. The unique qualities of the Memphis City Schools' inservice training program are detailed. Eight inservice training objectives are listed: (1) to understand the purpose, main provisions, and implications of P.L. 94-142; (2) to understand the criteria defining free, appropriate education; (3) to learn due process requirements and procedures; (4) to learn appropriate procedures for assessment and management of school records; (5) to understand the components of an individualized educational program (IEP); (6) to develop skills for designing IEPs; (7) to become more receptive to the requirements and implications of P.L. 94-142; and (8) to become familiar with different materials and methods used in teaching the handicapped child. Three approaches to provide inservice training for general education teachers are considered: presentation of materials on general characteristics of educable mentally retarded, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed children; followup of the faculty inservice meeting in which the SWIRT team assisted teachers in problem solving; and assistance with teachers in learning specific skills to work with exceptional students. (SBH)

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IN-SERVICE TRAINING

FOR

GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

IN COMPLIANCE WITH PL 94-142

UNDER THE

TENNESSEE STATE PLAN

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PHASE I

Coordinating Training with General Educators

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PHASE II

I.E.P. Management with General and Special Education Teachers

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PHASE III

Issues of Planning, Evaluation, and Material Coordination

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COORDINATING TRAINING WITH GENERAL EDUCATORS

In this presentation, the SWIRT Team will describe and analyze in-service training for general education teachers in compliance with P.L. 94-142 under the Tennessee State Plan. We will try to detail the unique qualities of the Memphis City Schools' in-service training and show how as well as why it works. Although this way is no guarantee of success, it is hoped that the material presented will be of help to you as you initiate in-service training for general education teachers.

P. L. 94-142 clearly states that all handicapped children, whatever the nature or degree of the disability, must be taught in the "least restrictive environment" appropriate for the child. Optimally, this means the regular classroom will be first choice, provided the program is appropriate for the child.

It was recognized at the outset that not all general education teachers would be immediately ready for the new responsibilities entailed in P.L. 94-142. As handicapped children are placed in regular classes, the responsibility for their educational programs shifts from being singularly assumed by special educators to being shared by educational faculty. All teachers will not likely have contact with handicapped children, and they must provide an appropriate curriculum. With this in mind, under the leadership of our Director, Mr. Harold Perry, we focused our in-service training on topics critical to general education teachers in implementing programs which were in compliance with P. L. 94-142. The in-service training was deisgned to assist in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for the successful implementation of the requirements of the law.

The training program was put together as a Staff Development In-Service in which general and special educators arranged to meet after school to acquire information about the law and its requirements. This was a support to general education teachers as they began to adjust their traditional school programs to better accommodate the differences among and within all the children in their classrooms. The objectives for in-service training were:

1. To understand the purpose, main provisions, and implications of P .L. 94-142.
2. To understand the criteria defining free, appropriate education.
3. To learn due process requirements and procedures.
4. To learn appropriate procedures for assessment and management of school records.
5. To understand the components of an Individualized Educational Program (IEP).
6. To develop skills for designing Individualized Education Programs
7. To become more receptive to the requirements and implications of P.L. 94-142.
8. To become familiar with different materials and methods used in teaching the handicapped child.

The objectives were formulated on the concern of general education teachers feeling of unpreparedness to educate handicapped children. As professional teachers want to do a competent job, however, they cannot do well what they have not been specifically trained to do.

I will share with you three approaches, in which Memphis City Schools under the Tennessee Plan have used to provide in-service training for general education teachers.

IN-SERVICE I

Participants: Elementary and Secondary Principals

Leaders: Director, Consultants, Area Specialists and SWIRT Team

Memphis City Schools recognized the line responsibility and authority to achieve the effective implementation of the law for both the handicapped child and his teacher would rest with the principal at the local school level. Although resources, help, advice, and support could be supplied from the central office, the final implementation of the requirements P.L.94-142 is at the local level. Not every principal was expected to make a success of the requirements of the law immediately. Consequently, in-service training, encouragement, and assistance were provided to principals by the staff from central office. The training provided sessions on basic special education concepts such as individual differences in learning potential, personal and social effects of handicaps, local school needs assessments, curricular modifications, adapted instructional materials, and expectations for various special teachers. These meetings were conducted on a group basis two full days at the beginning of the school year. This in-service training is credited with improving principals' ability to assess needs, coordinating team work, developing excellent programs, and providing continuity in the effort to bring about compliance of P.L. 94-142.

IN-SERVICE II

Participants: General and Special Education Teachers

Leaders: SWIRT Team

Many principals differed in how far along they and their programs were toward being in compliance with P.L. 94-142. This led the staff to make

provisions for individualized in-service training for specific schools during the school year. These sessions were conducted three hours for three sessions at selected schools. The in-service training included a broad range of activities and issues and provided teachers with a thorough knowledge of the provisions and requirements of the law. It also provided them information concerning the identification and evaluation process,procedures utilized in their own school, and their own responsibilities. Priority was given to the development of an individualized education program (IEP) for each child. These in-service training sessions shaped attitudes and sensitivities that helped general education teachers to overcome prejudices and fears. Teachers were able to relate more openly and effectively with handicapped children.

IN-SERVICE III

Participants: General and Special Education Teachers

Leaders: RE-SET Team and SWIRT Team

Continuing our efforts to improve and increase cooperation between general and special education teachers and to further in-service training, a RE-SET Team was selected in each school. This team, composed of one general education teacher and one special education teacher works together to coordinate in-service training within their respective schools. The SWIRT Team assisted the RE-SET Team in preparing the in-service and participated whenever it was necessary. In-service training was provided for one full day for all RE-SET Teams during the summer by the SWIRT Team to prepare them for their responsibilities. The training permitted general and special education teachers to work together simulating new ideas and then move into the actual implementation of P.L. 94-142. The efforts of the RE-SET Team are credited with going a long way toward

breaking down resistance among teachers and helping them and other staff members to learn to plan and act in concert.

IN-SERVICE IV

Participants: General and Special Education Teachers

Leaders: SWIRT Team

Funds were budgeted for substitute teachers to free general education teachers to participate in an all day in-service training . Schools were selected by the Director of Special Education. The SWIRT Team provided the teachers information to help them become knowledgeable about P.L. 94-142 and how it related to them as classroom teachers. Because the in-service training is an on-going process, consultation and technical assistance are provided by the SWIRT Team whenever needed.

The staff at central office realized a manual was needed for in-service training for effective presentations. The packet In-Service Manual For Implementation of P.L. 94-142 was prepared by the SWIRT Team to assist general and special education teachers in conducting in-service training. It was the first publication that addressed teachers and administrators stating clearly what P.L. 94-142 was and how it might affect learning and teaching.

The SWIRT Team ("Sometimes called the P.L. 94-142 People") held meetings with general education teachers, special education teachers, and principals to introduce them to the manual. We realize that formal orientation and on-going training for all school personnel are central to the effective implementation of P.L. 94-142.

I.E.P. MANAGEMENT WITH GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

One of the greatest impacts of P.L. 94-142 has been the requirement that an Individualized Education Program (IEP) be provided for each handicapped child. Although the I.E.P. is a legal mandate whose purpose is to insure that all handicapped children are provided with an appropriate education, the pinpointing of individual strengths and weaknesses and the development of a sequential curriculum addressing these needs and around which the individualized program is constructed is a difficult task for many teachers.

Recognizing the fact that I.E.P. construction could possibly necessitate the learning of new or refined skills on the part of a substantial number of educators the development of an effective in-service training program becomes essential.

It was felt that in-service training holds the real promise for improvement within the classroom for all children. Therefore, we expended a great deal of thought on the most effective approach to use in presenting the in-service component of which an Individualized Education Program is comprised. The importance of the general education teacher's role in its construction and implementation was emphasized.

Our initial effort consisted of an explanation of the law, due process procedures and the complete assessment process beginning with the initial referral and leading up to the construction of an Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.) initiated in the "M Team" meeting. An overhead projector was used to emphasize important aspects of the law,due process, and the different components of the I.E.P.

While this approach was informative, we discovered that at times we did not all "speak the same language". When the terms "M-Team", "I.E.P.", "annual goals and short term objectives," etc. were used, many of our general education counterparts were unfamiliar with this special education terminology. Unless someone in the audience asked for a further clarification of these terms, teachers often went away from the in-service with a less than desirable understanding of the complete I.E.P. process. In addition, the I.E.P. form we were using at that time was quite lengthy and the mere volume of paper work involved turned off many teachers.

From the lecture/demonstration approach initially used, we moved to a format that included active audience participation in the in-service. We still included an explanation of the due process procedures and the complete assessment process leading up to the "M-Team" meeting, but within this framework we also included a due process activity as well as a more detailed explanation and demonstration of the formulation and construction of an Individualized Education Program.

First we began by reorganizing our I.E.P. form, making it more concise. We then incorporated into our in-service, along with the explanation and demonstration of how an I.E.P. was constructed, the participation of each individual teacher in actually writing an I.E.P. Each teacher was given a blank I.E.P. form, and with the aid of an overhead projector the teachers completed their I.E.P.'s as each component was reviewed one step at a time. Group interaction was accomplished by having the audience as a whole participate in the developing of a hypothetical child from the beginning stages of deciding the child's name through agreeing on the child's present level of performance. Based on this performance level the group then estimated some

possible annual goals and short term objectives. A short written activity was provided for teachers which allowed them to individually practice constructing annual goals and short term objectives. Upon completion of this activity the teachers again returned to their I.E.P.'s and put into practice what they had learned. They constructed on their own additional annual goals and short term objectives that could apply to the hypothetical child.

After the I.E.P.'s had been completed each teacher followed along as the overhead projector was again utilized to demonstrate how these goals and objectives would be continuously updated throughout the school year.

Upon completion of the in-service, a previously completed sample copy of an I.E.P. was given to each teacher. This sample copy illustrated in greater detail possible annual goals and short term objectives, not only in the areas of reading and math, but also in the areas of perception, behavior and self help skills.

As a follow up to these workshops, the SWIRT Team assisted the special education teacher(s) in each individual school by going into the classroom of every general education teacher who was serving a handicapped child. Jointly the general and special education teachers constructed an I.E.P., not on a hypothetical child, but on a handicapped child who was currently being served within the general educators regular classroom.

By following up our in-services in this manner the important role played by individualized programming in helping to realize the goals of handicapped children in regular classrooms was more effectively emphasized. This made the I.E.P. not just a lesson in abstraction, but a real and meaningful

instructional plan that the general and special education teacher could jointly follow for the benefit of all handicapped children who were being served.

Some basic barriers lying between I.E.P. acceptance and effective communication between general and special educators continues to be personal and professional attitudes towards the handicapped child and a difference of opinion in role expectations. Though these barriers have not been totally eliminated they are being minimized through better understanding and cooperative teamwork between the general educator, the special educator, the handicapped student and the regular student. It is only through this continued open communication that the terms "appropriate education in the least restrictive environment" and "Individualized Education Program" will cease to be just so much rhetoric and begin to mean what they were intended: this simply being a meaningful education provided for <u>all</u> our children.

ISSUES OF PLANNING, EVALUATION, AND MATERIAL COORDINATION

The final phase of the in-service and one which is viewed as a continuous process is the materials and methods activity offered by the System Wide Itinerant Resource Teachers. This was approached from a viewpoint of aiding, supporting, and encouraging teachers and with the realization that in-service is a flexible on-going program which changes from year to year as needs arise.

In some instances the lounge, library, or an empty classroom was used as the site for a materials workshop and a place to confer with teachers. Techniques and ideas were shared with faculties as a whole, with smaller groups who share a common problem, or with individual teachers. This aspect of the in-service was approached from a standpoint of practical ideas that could be utilized in the regular classroom, and from the viewpoint that when adapting part of the instruction and providing materials for the exceptional child, the needs of other students in the classroom may also be met.

According to articles in recent journals, attitude is the single most important ingredient when dealing with exceptional students. When the occasion called for addressing a faculty concerning their part in educating the exceptional child,efforts were made to examine feelings toward handicapped people. Our ambitions for their more productive lives in the future and an overall greater acceptance by society was discussed.

Teachers were made aware of the fact that they are already serving, or they can in the future serve, as models and reinforcers of helpful behavior toward the handicapped.

Fostering helpful interactions between non-handicapped students and their handicapped peers were encouraged. In one discussion group, an economics teacher told of pairing more capable students with lower functioning ones who could not master the skill of threading a machine and allowing them to work together. She was used as an example of a teacher who was meeting the needs of handicapped students' lack of memory skills as well as fostering positive relationships between peers. This kind of attitude, acceptance, and action coming from a regular teacher has far greater impact upon other regular teachers than when cited from experiences of those in special education.

Supporting teachers in the efforts they were already making and aiding and encouraging them in becoming more adept at meeting the needs of exceptional children is approaching this issue from a positive, rather than a negative view.

Sharing of general information that would be helpful to most special education students was deemed best when addressing a large group of teachers. It was felt that the scope of specific needs is too large to attempt in a presentation. Also sharing techniques and skills for specific learning disabilities, behavior management, and other more severe handicaps would only be effective when the regular teacher could relate it directly to the student in her classroom.

General characteristics of educable mentally retarded, learning disabled, and emotionally disturbed youngsters were discussed. During presentations of this nature, materials were shown that were inexpensive and available at local school supply stores. Commercial materials were presented and demonstrated, especially kits that could be purchased by the school and placed in

the library. Adapting classroom materials was discussed as was methods for using them.

The next approach in helping teachers was a follow-up of the faculty in-service meeting where it was explained that the SWIRT Team was available to assist them in their efforts. The key to making this a successful venture is the ability to approach each situation as a problem-solving one which involves the expertise of both parties. The regular teacher is more aware than anyone of the difficulty a student is experiencing in the classroom. The team members listened to the problem, to methods and materials already tried, to how the student could function, then made suggestions using the materials available in the class and offered additional ideas and materials that might be helpful.

An example of this in-service activity involved three kindergarten teachers, each of whom had one student with extremely low ability. Listening to the problem and how the teachers were coping gave good insight to their understanding of the students. In this instance, their expectations were too high. Practical teaching suggestions, such as involving the tactile sense in conjunction with the visual and auditory were given. This type of in-service definitely meets one of the criteria of effective in-service training, that of relevance.

The last method utilized was also one of helping teachers learn specific skills to work with exceptional students and was on a one-to-one basis. When a teacher asked for assistance, a visit was made to the class to observe or listen to the teacher discuss her need. Suggestions were made, and examples of the kinds of materials needed were furnished. Articles referring to the

disability were shared so the teacher could become more knowledgeable of the specific handicapping condition with which she was dealing.

Evaluation was a continuous process, and the mode depended on what phase of the program was being considered. A pre-test and post-test concerning information of the workshop was part of the evaluation. After each informational session, a written evaluation was obtained. In some cases where team members helped formulate a management program for a student, an assessment could be made by observing the student. In events of assisting teachers, a follow-up visit and noting less frustration on the teachers' part was an informal but subjective evaluation. For the most part, evaluation was from written observation by teachers and informal sessions which included listening to teachers.

It is felt that as regular teachers gain more knowledge about handicapped students and develop methods and materials for use in the classroom, they would become additional resource people within that school. This is planning for a long range goal which would give optimum educational services to all children.